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AGO D/A ltr dtd 29 Apr 1980

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS
13TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
(DELTA BATTALION)
APO 96215

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AD831136

AVBA-DB-3

15 August 1966

SUBJECT: Operational Report On Lessons Learned Period Ending 3 July 1966
(RCS CSG PO-28 (RI))

STATEMENT #2 UNCLASSIFIED

TO:

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SECTION I

UNCLASIFIED

SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATION OR UNIT ACTIVITIES

a. ORGANIZATION: During the reporting period the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion included:

(1) Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment with attached 53rd Quartermaster Detachment and 13th Security Detachment.

(2) Company A, 101st Aviation Battalion (AML) with attached 167th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 41st Medical Detachment, 277th Signal Detachment (Avionics) and 78th Artillery Detachment (Radar).

(3) 114th Aviation Company (AML) with attached 544th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 96th Signal Detachment (Avionics), 83rd Medical Detachment and 62nd Quartermaster Detachment (POL).

(4) 121st Aviation Company (AML) with attached 80th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 257th Signal Detachment (Avionics).

(5) Company A, 502nd Aviation Battalion (AML) with attached 150th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance) and 28th Signal Detachment (Avionics).

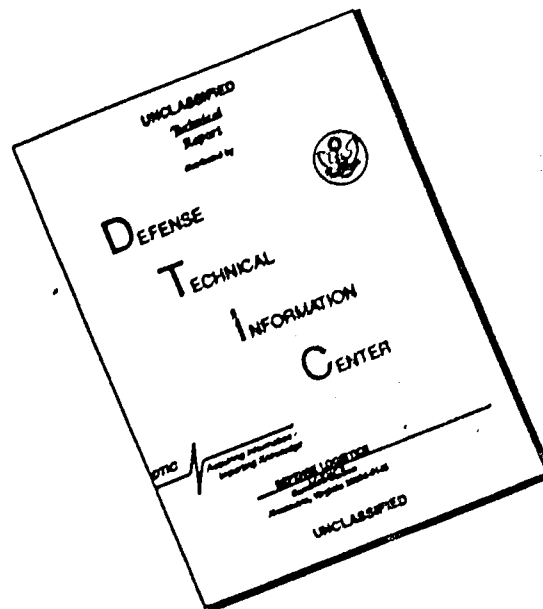
(6) 221st Reconnaissance Airplane Company.

b. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES: During the reporting period the two airborne companies stationed at Vinh Long; Co A, 502nd Aviation Battalion, and the 114th Aviation Company completed changeover to UH1D troop carriers from the UH1B. In June, Delta Battalion was authorized the 5th Armed Platoon.

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The 114th Aviation Company was designated to receive the 5th Armed Platoon giving the company 16 armed ships and a total of 33 UH1 helicopters. The new platoon has four of its eight authorized ships armed with complete gun systems. The first XM-23 door gun mounts and new aerial machine guns arrived in the Delta Battalion in May. Since this time all units except Co A, 101st Avn Bn have been equipped with the XM-23 system either through direct exchange or issue with new aircraft.

c. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AVIATION SUPPORT: The Delta Aviation Battalion and assigned units continued to provide operational and administrative support to the ARVN IV Corps, and other agencies operating in the IV Corps tactical zone. Operational and administrative support missions include command liaison, outpost resupply, medical evacuation, radio relay, defoliation, escort and survey. Statistics generated in support of these missions are as follows:

	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Total</u>
Hours Flown	12,505	12,274	16,468	41,247
Sorties	20,270	19,870	17,036	57,176
Passengers Moved	49,683	50,506	51,087	151,276
Cargo Tons Moved	2,195	2,897	1,768	6,860

d. TACTICAL AVIATION SUPPORT: Tactical support was rendered to ARVN IV Corps, its subordinate units, and Special Forces units operating in the IV Corps tactical zone as well as limited support to Field Forces Victor II and its subordinate units. Support during this period included airlanded assault missions, eagle flights, reconnaissance, surveillance, leaflet dissemination, armed escort, aeromedical evacuation, night armed surveillance, canal curfew enforcement (lightning Bug) and dispensation of riot control agents. Statistics generated in support of these missions are as follows:

	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Total</u>
Heliborne Assault Missions	25	28	21	74
Hours Flown	4,002	4,169	4,247	12,418
Sorties	8,134	10,190	11,962	30,386
Troops Moved	17,103	21,234	26,299	64,636

e. Operation Long Chi 219 (21st & 9th ARVN Divisions) 20-23 June 1966:

21st Division troops and 44 helicopters were poised at Soc Trang on 20 June to initiate Dan Chi 237B when word was received that a steel hulled oceangoing trawler had run aground on the Vinh Binh coast during pursuit

operations. U.S. Navy and Vietnamese Navy patrol boats and ships had the vessel under surveillance. It was afire from gunfire during the chase. A beach perimeter to secure the area was necessary to suppress enemy fire from the beach 100 meters from the vessel. The IV Corps Commanding General, who was at Soc Trang, cancelled Dan Chi 237B and committed 21st Division elements into the 9th Division area in order to rapidly secure the area and to ensure capture of the boat intact. CV-2's were recalled from other missions and moved a 21st Division Battalion from Soc Trang to Tra Vinh to constitute a reserve. An out-of-sector lift of 16 helicopters, including an armed platoon from Co A, 82nd Aviation Battalion was provided to supplement Delta Battalion resources. At 1119 hours the first lift of the 21st Division was put into a beach LZ. The naval forces then were able to move next to the trawler and extinguish the fire. By 1400 hours two 21st Division Battalions had been landed and had established the beach perimeter. Two battalions of the 9th Division were then lifted from Tra Vinh into an LZ further inland at Ba Dong village. A total of 1,201 troops were lifted. There were no extractions as the four battalions remained in position overnight to maintain security for the uncompleted salvage operation, which was to continue the next day. At 1930 hours six helicopters staged at Tra Vinh and conducted a lightning bug operation in the operational area. Armed ships killed 12 VC and destroyed five structures. On 21 June 31 helicopters staged from Soc Trang and Tra Vinh initially to support the 21st Division. A battalion of the 21st Division was extracted from the area and taken to Soc Trang. At least one armed platoon was on station throughout the day but no significant contact was made by them or the ground troops. Five battalions remained in the area overnight. The 21st Division terminated its support of Long Chi 219 on 22 June as 19 helicopters extracted two battalions from the Long Toan area to Soc Trang. The aircraft then reverted to 9th Division to an LZ southwest of the operational area where a large VC unit had been reported. There was negative contact however. On 23 June the 9th Division terminated Long Chi 219 with a battalion helicopterborne assault, supported by 20 helicopters and one armed platoon. The first flight into the LZ received mortar fire. The armed team on station conducted extensive search with negative results. The second flight, having been supported by heavy suppressive fire, was not mortared. The third flight was mortared and this time the tubes were located. Thereafter, suppressive fire was continuous in these areas during subsequent extractions. The suppressive fires were provided by an armed fire team and the Battalion command and control helicopter. In all, 633 troops were extracted with no casualties and no troop carriers damaged. A total of 250 tons of equipment was captured. The operation highlighted the mobility and rapid reaction of helicopterborne forces, and the utility of armed helicopters in a fire support role.

f. Operation Dan Chi 239. 28-29 June 1966: On 28 June the 21st Division staged at Ca Mau into an area east of Dam Doi to relieve pressure on Dam Doi, reestablish the outpost system, exchange troops and resupply the Dam Doi garrison. Delta Battalion supported with 48 aircraft which included three armed platoons. Co A, 101st Combat Aviation Battalion provided the mission commander. Six lifts and two extractions were made

for a total of 1766 troops carried. The armed platoons supported all phases of the operation by providing assault landing escort and supporting fires to the ground maneuver elements. One reinforced VC Company was engaged resulting in 82 VC KIA, 2 AA MG, three AA tripods, 42 individual weapons, one K-50 SMG and one VC captured. Ground advisors later credited the entire kill to the three armed platoons. The 21st Division continued to operate in the Dam Doi area on the 29th of June. Delta Battalion supported this relief of forces and resupply operation with 45 aircraft including three armed platoons. Troop carriers lifted a total of 2,047 troops and 15 tons of supplies.

g. TACTICS: The immediate reaction force (IRF) consisting of an 80 man lift, an armed platoon, a command and control aircraft and a medical evacuation ship on 15 minute ramp alert, was developed in April and was covered in the last report. It was employed twice in June at Vinh Long. Both operations resulted from mortarings of the airfield and both operations were successful. The lifts were conducted during the hours of darkness within minutes following the termination of the mortar attack. The LZs were marked by the armed platoon using a very pistol. At 0125 8 June a 58 man ARVN reaction force was lifted into an area near where the armed ships had fired into the suspected position. Although no contact or sightings were made, a subsequent operation at dawn resulted in 30 VC KIA by an armed platoon. With the possibility of employment of combat troops at night established, it is anticipated that the IRF will be used by ARVN more readily in the future.

The past reporting period has been characterized by an increased use of armed platoons of Delta Battalion. In delta operations, helicopter delivered fires, reconnaissance and security are available in the battle area throughout the operation. Armed fire teams and platoons spell each other on a schedule which affords continuous coverage. In a fire support role, ARVN divisions of IV Corps, now consider the armed helicopter as the primary weapons system. On occasion, tactical air strikes have been discontinued and armed helicopters placed overhead to support the assault on VC positions. The reasons are several. The armed platoons have continuous direct communication with the ground commander and their fires can be redirected quickly. The armed helicopter can provide more discriminating fire support because of its slower speed and ability to work close to the target. In consort with the ground forces it can pry the enemy from his position and closely pursue and kill. In recent months the armed helicopter has been so effective in this role that ARVN divisions in the Delta have credited it with at least 50% of the enemy killed in helicopter supported operations. It has been equally useful in area and route reconnaissance and convoy cover. Many if not most of the targets selected for tactical air strikes during air-mobile operations have been discovered and identified by armed helicopters. In convoy cover it works close to the ground where the pilot can more readily detect ambushes and use his firepower to neutralize or destroy the enemy. The effectiveness of the armed helicopter could be further improved by development of better weapons systems. Those in use are

adaptations of ground or tactical air weapons. Better integrated and more reliable weapons are required. During the period, in an effort to improve fire support, one armed platoon was equipped with XM-18 mini-gun systems. Utilizing gun pylons and mounts, one mini-gun was mounted on each side of UH1B. In addition to the fixed mounted mini-guns, the aircraft also carries the M-5 40mm system. It has proven highly successful against sampans and emplacements along canal lines and mangroves.

During the reporting period Delta Battalion has continued to explore the uses of CS riot control agent. The hand grenade has been used by armed platoons in the reconnaissance role. Since the VC are reluctant to expose their position by firing at the helicopters their detection has become more difficult. The CS has forced them to leave their position and thus expose themselves. More work is required in developing this tactic. The ARVN's reluctance to use the agent has also hampered progress.

h. The Delta Aviation Battalion conducted a thirty day test of parallel spot reporting system to speed the flow of intelligence information. In concept, the spot reporting system was to provide backup support for the ARVN Sector and Division intelligence sections while simultaneously providing a parallel line of intelligence to G2, IV Corps. This system enables the G2, IV Corps, to anticipate flow from the units. Previously, evaluation of reported information was delayed 6-12 hours. This new system now provides for immediate evaluation and analysis opportunity. Delta Battalion has also begun collecting data for a target analysis book on terrain, waterways, and all activity by the VC. The information is at present being posted daily on a thirty day basis. All postings of fortifications, however, are retained indefinitely. Information in this target book provides both historical activity data and current information on any operational area in the delta and makes it possible to provide immediate overlays and general situation paragraphs for any operation.

i. VC ACTIVITY: VC activity in the IV Corps continues a trend back to Phase II of insurgency. With several notable exceptions, VC initiated action has been by company-size or smaller units. There has been a reduction in VC initiated attacks with an increase in harrassments, sabotage, minings, assassinations and town and city incidents. Acts of terrorism are frequent.

j. TRAINING: During the reporting period, replacement training of new aviators was the most significant activity. The 221st Airplane Reconnaissance Company experienced a complete turnover of personnel in July on the anniversary of its arrival in country. Fortunately, replacements were fed into the company during June so that in-country orientations were conducted during an overlap with experienced aviators.

SECTION II

COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part I Observations (Lessons Learned)

OPERATIONS

Item: Flexibility is the key word in air mobility.

Discussion: Delta Battalion stresses flexibility so that rapid execution can be effected. This is necessary because the majority of operations stem from recent intelligence and must be mounted quickly. In the delta area, combat is short and violent. Set battles are unknown and there are no extended delaying actions or pushing type of combat normally associated with infantry. The VC dig in habitually along canal lines and outpost into the rice fields with local guerillas who shoot and try to lure ARVN troops away from main positions. They move frequently, seldom remaining overnight in the same place more than two consecutive nights. The VC try to avoid contact until late in the afternoon. At that time they may accept combat and hope to inflict heavy casualties before breaking contact during the ensuing darkness. Because of the fluidity of the battlefield in the Delta, extensive preplanning is not possible. Based upon the ground tactical plan, proposed landing sites are selected and a series of four or five release points are designated in a circle around the operational area. These provide a means of meeting the requirements of weather, enemy and terrain. If landing zones are changed, it is a simple matter to use a different RP or to vary the heading from the original RP. A series of checkpoints is added over the operational area. These permit rapid identification of flight routes, areas to be reconnoitered, or artillery concentrations. Artillery firing positions are located on the overlay and numbered. The command and control aircraft then can alert aircraft in the operational area by cryptic announcements of fires from a firing position to checkpoints. Designated strike areas (free bomb zones) and naval gunfire areas also are included on the overlay. When flights report to airmobile mission commander that they are airborne, they are given instructions to a designated release point where they are taken over by an armed platoon leader for final approach to the landing zone and departure from it. Flight corridors are shunned as being particularly restrictive. Extensive loading plans also are not employed because of the many changes in aircraft and troop status which occur during the course of an operation. Unit commanders are given the number of aircraft which will lift them, then conform their loads to the assets available. When one flight must pause for refueling, airlift can be continued by subsequent flights and the refueled flight then joins in based upon the then-current situation. This enables the airmobile mission commander to get the greatest lift from the aircraft available. He is not bound by chalk numbers and weighty preplanning which so often is unravelled by maintenance and combat losses.

Observation: In order to exercise the greatest flexibility, the airmobile units should have SOP's and battle drills which permit quick response to tactical opportunities and changes in the situation.

Item: Employment of Air Force Tactical Aircraft.

Discussion: In the Delta there is no separate air war. The airmobile task force commander (usually the division commander) has ultimate authority on whether a strike takes place or is sent elsewhere. He has exercised his authority to better integrate tactical air into the combat operation. In earlier months, Air Force flights required that all activity by artillery and Army aircraft terminate in the area of the strike during airstrikes. This in effect stood down the battle while the Air Force worked. To permit a continuance of operations in at least part of the battlefield attacking fighter flights now conform to set patterns which still gave them an acceptable variation in flight paths. All other aircraft in the area having been informed of details of the strike by the mission commander, can continue to operate in close proximity. At present, fighter strikes frequently occur within a few hundred meters in front of landing troop lift formations. Often the fighters save their 20mm ammunition and CBU for application to hostile woodlines as the troop carrier aircraft approach touchdown. This is highly integrated activity but it does not take the place of armed helicopters which are necessary for detailed reconnaissance of the landing zone and for discriminating fires adjacent to friendly troops. Air Force close support is high volume area fire and approximates aerial bombardment more than actual close support.

Observation: Air Force tactical air strikes can be closely integrated with friendly maneuver during airmobile operations.

Part II Recommendations:

a. The aviator replacement program for Viet Nam should be accelerated to permit manning of units at 100% of TOE at the earliest practicable time. Units are manned now at 90% TOE. However, aircraft augmentation already accomplished has reduced the effective manning level to 86% and additional augmentation is programmed for the Battalion in the immediate future. Under the reduced manning level, there are mission ready aircraft daily which cannot be manned. These aircraft are needed for support of IV Corps. Requisition have been submitted.

b. A company size security unit be assigned to the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion. This company should have its own command and control structure and only be dependent on the aviation battalion for administration of personnel records as are the airmobile companies. The present security detachment does not have the necessary personnel to adequately provide twenty-four hour protection of critical areas at three airfields, nor does it provide the necessary officer and non-commissioned officer personnel

to train and supervise these personnel. An MTOE to this effect has been submitted.

Jack T. Dempsey
JACK T. DEMPSEY
Colonel, Inf
Commanding

AVBA-C (15 August 1966)

1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 July 1966
(RCS CSG FO-28 (RI))

HEADQUARTERS, 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE, APO 96307

23 AUG 1966

TO: Commanding General, United States Army, Vietnam, ATTN: AVC-DH, APO
96307

This headquarters considers subject report for the 13th Combat Aviation
Battalion to be adequate and concurs with the recommendations contained
therein.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



FRANCIS T. PACHLER, JR.
1LT, Infantry
Asst Adjutant

AVHGC-IH (15 August 1966)

2nd Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 July 1966
(RCS CSG PO-28 (RI))

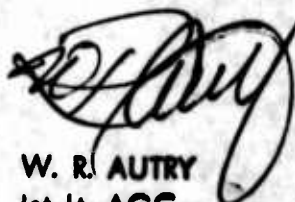
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96307, 15 Sep 66

TO: Commander-in-Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-MH
APO 96558

1. The Operational Report-Lessons Learned submitted by the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion is forwarded herewith. This headquarters considers the report adequate and concurs with the recommendations contained therein.

2. Reference paragraph b, Part II, Section II: The MTOE for the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion was sent to the 1st Aviation Brigade for comment as other aviation units were involved. The MTOE has not been resubmitted to this headquarters.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



W. R. AUTRY
1st Lt, AGC
Asst Adjutant General

GPOP-OT(15 Aug 66)

3d Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 July 1966
(RCS CSG PO-28 (RI))

HQ, US ARMY, PACIFIC, APO San Francisco 96558 27 SEP 1966

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

1. The Operational Report-Lessons Learned from the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion and forwarding indorsements have been reviewed.
2. This headquarters concurs in the report and the actions taken by the reporting and intervening headquarters on the commander's recommendations.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:



L. L. CHAPPELL
MAJ, AGC
Asst AG